

DOCKET ITEM #8

Wayfinding Sign Program – Phase I

Issue: Conceptual approval of Phase 1 of the Wayfinding program.	Planning Commission Hearing:	April 7, 2009
	City Council Hearing:	N/A
Description: Consideration of a request for conceptual approval of Phase I of the City's Wayfinding Sign Program.		
Staff: Andrea Barlow, Principal Planner andrea.barlow@alexandriava.gov Carrie Beach, Urban Planner carrie.beach@alexandriava.gov		

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

I. SUMMARY

Conceptual Approval of Phase 1 Signs

Staff is asking that Planning Commission consider conceptual approval of sign types recommended for Phase 1 of the Wayfinding program. Phase 1 signs, listed in detail below, are limited to pedestrian and parking signs in Old Town. BAR Old and Historic District will make a recommendation on Phase 1 on April 1 and Staff will provide the results of that vote to Planning Commission on April 7. After Planning Commission makes a recommendation on April 7, City Council will determine whether to fund Phase 1 in the CIP on April 27. Design refinement of the entire system, including Phase 1, will continue over the summer and Planning Commission will have the opportunity to provide input as desired prior to completion of the *Citywide Wayfinding Program Design Guidelines Manual* in the fall. Staff anticipates that the design guidelines manual will go to the Planning Commission for public hearing in October 2009.

Conceptual approval of Phase 1 signs means that the Planning Commission approves the:

- General function and program of each type of sign;
- General location, distribution and quantity of signs;
- General message and content of signs; and
- Overall general design.

Below is a detailed list of the Phase 1 sign types for which approval is requested. Attachment 1 provides images depicting the proposed signs in context and Attachment 2 indicates proposed Phase 1 sign locations on King Street.

Phase 1 Sign Types

1. Parking Lot Identity Sign for Structured Garages (Qty. 6)
 - Purpose: to identify parking garages within the district
 - Mounted to building façades with brackets
 - Illumination is recommended
 - New signs will replace existing signs one for one
 - Panel is approximately 6'6"H x 3'3"W
2. Parking Lot Identity Sign for Surface Lots (Qty. 5)
 - Purpose: to identify parking garages within the district
 - Mounted to freestanding poles
 - Illumination is recommended
 - New signs will replace existing signs one for one
 - Panel is approximately 6'H x 3'3"W
3. Parking Trailblazer Sign (vertical) (Qty. 50)
 - Purpose: to lead visitors efficiently from main roads to parking lots

- mounted to existing light poles throughout the district
 - new signs will replace existing signs one for one
 - small vertical panel is approximately 32"H x 18"W (although the sizes of existing parking trailblazer signs vary widely, this is slightly smaller on average than the existing signs)
4. Parking Trailblazer Sign (horizontal) (Qty. 20)
- Purpose: to lead visitors efficiently from main roads to parking lots
 - mounted to existing signal crossarms throughout the district
 - new signs will replace existing signs one for one
 - larger horizontal panel is approximately 18"H x 5'6-1/2"W (although the sizes of existing parking trailblazer signs vary widely, this is larger on average than the existing parking signs on the signal cross arms)
5. Pedestrian Directional Pointer for non-street grid areas (Qty. 5)
- Purpose: to direct pedestrians at confusing points of entry such as the Metro Station and Waterfront where it can be helpful to "lead by the nose."
 - mounted to new posts approximately 12' tall
 - these are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing signs)
 - the arrow shaped pointer panels are approximately 22"H x 3'W; Post: 6"sq. x 12'H
6. Freestanding Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 2)
- Purpose: to provide comprehensive information to pedestrians regarding attractions, orientation, events and Alexandria history in large plaza-type areas such as Market Square
 - The first two kiosks implemented in Phase 1 will be located in Market Square and at the Metro Station (the interim kiosk at the Waterfront will remain)
 - Illumination is recommended
 - Large four-sided rectangular box is approximately 11'H x 3'W and contains four pedestrian information display panels measuring approximately 6'6"H x 3'W
 - Proposing a stone (or similar) base and a metal roof
 - The kiosks are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing signs)
7. Wall Mounted Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 6)
- Purpose: to provide initial orientation to visitors exiting parking garages on foot
 - Mounted on exterior walls of garages (new buildings only)
 - The visitor panels are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing)
 - The panel is approximately 6'6"H x 3'W

8. Pedestrian Mini Kiosk (Qty. 20)

- Purpose: to provide periodic orientation and visitor information to visitors along pedestrian corridors such as King Street as a supplement to the comprehensive information found at the large freestanding visitor kiosks
- Mini-kiosks are small four-sided rectangular “boxes” that would be wrapped around existing light poles.
- The interchangeable panels are approximately 36"H x 12"W
- The kiosks are new elements in the Wayfinding system (not replacing existing signs)
- To address the expressed desire by businesses off King Street for more visibility, Staff has explored three options for the programming of the mini-kiosks, ranging from detailed inclusion of the names of businesses off-King Street, to a more generic listing of amenities with the focus instead on historic attractions. The options are:
 - Option A: List each business; locate kiosks 2 per intersection
 - Option B: List businesses by category such as “Antiques,” “Café’s” etc; locate kiosks 2 per intersection
 - Option C: Do not list businesses on the kiosks, only historic attractions and use symbols to indicate visitor amenities such as shopping and dining. This option would be supplemented with a permanent A-frame program coordinated in design with the Wayfinding Program; kiosks located at periodic intervals on King Street. (A temporary A-frame program is currently in effect until November 1, 2009. For more information on this program, please refer to the March 14, 2009 City Council docket item provided as Attachment 3).
- *Staff recommends that Planning Commission postpone a decision on how or whether to include the retail component of the pedestrian mini-kiosks pending further study that will include a trial of the A-frame program during the summer months. As outlined above, the options will result in different quantities of signs and sign locations, and therefore additional time is warranted to review the options. Staff is asking the Planning Commission to approve the concept of the mini-kiosks as a Wayfinding element as shown in Attachment 1, but not resolve the retail component at this time.*

9. Old Town District Gateway (Qty. 0)

- The Phase 1 CIP request originally submitted to City Council included funding for 2 Old Town district gateway signs. Staff is **not** asking Planning Commission to review or approve these signs at this stage. Staff will recommend that City Council remove these signs from the Phase 1 funding request as the signs have not been fully developed and reviewed. District gateway signs will be incorporated into later phases of the program.

II. BACKGROUND:

Why is a Wayfinding Program Needed?

Several years ago, a study undertaken by the City evaluated the need for a new visitors' center. The study concluded that a major weakness citywide is an ineffective and inadequate sign program to direct persons around the City, including informational and directional signs for visitors, tourists, residents, and business travelers. For example, there are currently no pedestrian signs in Old Town directing visitors to historic attractions. The proposed system will fill critical gaps in the current signage.

The study clearly indicated that in order to orient and inform visitors and residents, motivate them to visit historic sites, and make navigation of the City easier, a coordinated signage and wayfinding program was needed. With increased regional competition for retail, restaurant, and tourism dollars, this is a key economic development project recommended by the Economic Sustainability Task Force and supported by City Council with the allocation of CIP funding for planning the system. It should also be noted that with the advent of National Harbor, and the expectation of more development there and on the Washington waterfront, it is expected that King Street will experience a continued increase in visitors. The water taxi and the trolley are both responses to elevated tourism and the Wayfinding program is a strategic way of managing this increase in a positive way for the City. As regards the Old Town commercial district in particular, the City's retail advisor also cited implementation of the proposed Wayfinding system as an essential element in maintaining the economic vitality of the commercial district.

The intent of the coordinated sign and wayfinding program is to provide for the comprehensive design of a signage, wayfinding and identity system that will project a consistent image for the entire City, reduce clutter, fill critical gaps in signage, promote walking and mass transit, and be sustainable as well as expandable.

Community and City Review (Process and Outreach)

The current Wayfinding program was initiated in late 2007 with the selection of the design firm Sasaki and Associates to develop a citywide sign system. Sasaki first performed analysis of existing conditions, destinations and routes, and then initiated multiple phases of programming and design development in partnership with the City. The City established a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to represent a broad mix of interests city wide, including senior citizens, disabled residents, historic groups, business, arts, tourism, and the pedestrian/cycling community. A list of the SAG membership is provided as Attachment 5. The SAG met over the course of the last year to develop a program and design compatible with the City as a whole as well as its unique districts. Over nine meetings and two virtual surveys, the SAG resolved issues of messaging, content, program, color, scale, shape and overall character that were shared and refined in three community meetings and in partnership with the City. All of the meetings were advertised via the City's eNews notification program and on the City's web site, and

materials from each meeting were posted to the City's Wayfinding web page. The SAG will continue to meet in order to finalize the design and complete the program and the community will be asked to provide final input through an online survey.

The City Working Group (CWG), composed of representatives from Planning and Zoning (including Historic Preservation Staff), Transportation & Environmental Services, Office of Historic Alexandria, General Services, and Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, reviewed and refined the program in partnership with the consultant team and feedback from the SAG and the community. In addition, Staff has also presented the Wayfinding program to the Federation of Civic Associations, the Board of Old Town Civic Association, and the Beautification Commission, all in March 2009. The Phase 1 Concept Plan before you incorporates comments from all of the above City Departments and civic organizations.

Work sessions were held in January 2009 to update City Council, Planning Commission and both Boards of Architectural Review (BAR) on the progress to date. At that time City Council requested that the BAR review and approve the proposed Wayfinding program prior to approval by Planning Commission and prior to a funding decision from City Council in April. Although Section 9-103 of the Zoning Ordinance exempts the signs from BAR review since they are considered City-installed signs in "furtherance of governmental responsibilities," the City would like the BAR to review and approve the program to ensure that it is in keeping with the historic character of Old Town. City Staff held second and third work sessions with the Old and Historic District BAR on February 18 (joint with the Parker-Gray BAR) and March 18 in order to review and refine the signs proposed for a Phase 1 implementation of the program.

Phasing

Current fiscal constraints required a strategic look at how best to use limited funds likely to deliver the highest return. In consultation with Sasaki, Staff is proposing a limited Phase 1 implementation focused exclusively on pedestrian and parking signs in Old Town – sign types that are directly related to tourism and economic development. One of the goals of the system overall is to encourage exploration of the City's attractions on foot, and an early emphasis on parking directionals is one strategy for achieving that by providing clear direction to and identification of public parking through a consistent and recognizable system so that visitors can park immediately upon arriving in Old Town rather than circling blocks looking for parking. In addition, the proposed pedestrian directional signs fill a current gap in existing signage by directing visitors down side streets off of King Street to historic attractions.

Phase 1 will be voted on in concept by the BAR on April 1 and Planning Commission on April 7 prior to City Council considering CIP funding for Phase 1 on April 27. The remainder of the citywide system will be funded through the CIP in subsequent years and implemented in phases throughout the rest of the City in a cohesive and strategic manner.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS:

Compatibility with Historic District

The proposed Wayfinding signs are in conformance with existing sign guidelines. As mentioned previously, representatives from the Office of Historic Alexandria, Archaeology and Historic Preservation serve on the City Working Group to review and comment on the design and programming of the system and ensure that the design is informed by and compatible with the City's rich architectural history. In addition, members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group representing the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission and the National Park Service provided input on color, scale and form that shaped the current design.

At the outset of the program, the consultant team was directed to develop a system of signs that would be compatible with the City's historic districts and also be flexible enough to complement the City as a whole. Within Old Town, it is important that the design reflect the nature of Old Town as a historic district, a residential neighborhood and a commercial district. Staff believes that the proposed system strikes an appropriate balance that complements all three. The current collection of mismatched signs, missing links and visual clutter will be replaced with an appropriately scaled, cohesive, streamlined and attractive system.

While the overall look and feel of the system has been established, Sasaki will continue to work with the community, CWG, SAG and the BAR to further refine aspects of the design such as size, color and illumination to ensure that the system as a whole is sensitive to and does not detract from the existing historic character of Old Town.

Sign Clutter

Several groups have expressed concern about the existing sign clutter along King Street and about the number of Wayfinding signs proposed. In order to further clarify the issue of additional sign clutter, Staff has undertaken a detailed inventory of the existing signage on King Street. This is summarized in Attachment 4. The survey identified 359 signs along King Street between the Waterfront and Metro Station. Of these, 66% are regulatory signs. Although not part of the Wayfinding program, Planning & Zoning Staff propose to review the regulatory signs with T&ES to investigate opportunities to consolidate and eliminate signs, especially those defining parking restrictions. In addition, there are 121 banners, all of which the Wayfinding program proposes to remove based on input from the community, the BAR and Sasaki's recommendation. The existing Dash and Trolley stop signs are frequently combined on one pole and will not be affected by the new Wayfinding sign program. The visitor information or "thistle" signs will be replaced by the vehicular directionals and, as far as they are currently used for pedestrian orientation (in the absence of any other visitor attraction signs), they would be supplanted by the proposed mini- kiosks.

Phase 1 Sign Replacement/Removal Detail

The current white/green or blue/white parking directional signs will be replaced generally on a one-for-one basis by the proposed parking directional signs. Along King Street, there are currently nine horizontal signs attached to signal crossarms and seven vertical signs attached to upright posts that will be replaced one-for-one by the new signs. The remaining Phase 1 parking directional signs will be at other locations throughout Old Town. When the consultant team completes its analysis, they may determine that some signs are unnecessary or that new signs are required to complete the system.

The existing blue/white pedestrian ("x blocks to the Metro") orientation signs and the brown/white "shops" and "more shops" signs will be removed and replaced by the mini kiosks. There are currently 27 of these signs along King Street. Phase 1 proposes installing 20 mini-kiosks. Under mini-kiosk Option C, this would be the final number of kiosks installed, to be supplemented by A-frames at the discretion of business owners. As a point of reference, there are currently 18 A-frame permits issued under the temporary pilot program, with the potential of up to 60 A-frames. Under options A or B, 12 additional mini-kiosks would eventually be required to complete the system, for a total of 32 mini-kiosks on King Street.

The numerical impact of the above Phase 1 signs on the King Street corridor is shown in Attachment 4. The existing 16 parking directionals and 27 pedestrian orientation and "more shops" signs (combined total of 43 signs) will be replaced by 34 new signs (parking directional signs and mini-kiosks). This is a 20% reduction in these sign categories.

An additional element of Phase 1 is the large kiosks and pedestrian pointers. These are entirely new signs, which will be located in large plaza areas at the Metro Station, Market Square and the Waterfront. These locations are generally less sensitive to the impact of sign clutter than the King Street corridor.

Future Maintenance

A hallmark of the development of the Wayfinding program is to create a comprehensive system of signs that is cost effective in terms of design, implementation and maintenance. With that in mind, Sasaki has developed a system that features modular panels for easy updating, shared components across multiple sign types, straightforward, industry standard fabrication techniques, standard, readily available materials and parts, and savvy phasing for maximum economic impact and production run pricing. As a team, P&Z, T&ES and Sasaki have carefully reviewed the materials and maintenance program to ensure that the City will be able to maintain the system efficiently and cost-effectively. All sign panels in the Wayfinding system will be made of painted aluminum sheets with UV and graffiti resistant coating and applied with cut vinyl reflective lettering. Posts and sign supports are painted metal of simple, sturdy construction and lasting quality, consistent with existing metal posts in the district.

Planning Commission Future Review of Wayfinding Program

After Phase 1 of the program is approved, the Wayfinding program will undergo final design refinement between May and September 2009. This review period will be the time to finalize minor details of Phase 1 and to complete the design development of the remaining sign types in the citywide sign program. The remaining sign types in the system are:

- Vehicular Directionals
- Destination ID Signs (Civic, Park, Historic Attraction)
- Heritage-Interpretive signs
- Bicycle trail signs (off road only)
- City Gateways
- District Gateways
- Neighborhood Signs

Staff will review the remaining designs with the SAG, CWG, BAR, civic groups and the Planning Commission. In the fall, Planning Commission will be asked to approve the *Citywide Wayfinding program Design Guidelines Manual*, a fabrication, installation and maintenance manual for all sign types citywide, including those signs proposed in Phase 1. Final review and production of the document is anticipated for September, followed by BAR and Planning Commission public hearings tentatively set for October. Approval of the design guidelines manual will be similar in process to the approval of the Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines and other district design guidelines in that Planning Commission alone will approve the document, not City Council. City Council will ultimately have review of the program through the CIP process.

Approval of the *Citywide Wayfinding Program Design Guidelines Manual* will mean that design of the overall program is complete. It should be noted that the O&HD BAR has requested to review each sign implemented in Old Town prior to installation. Therefore, after the manual has been approved, and prior to installation of any signs in Old Town, the BAR will have the opportunity to review the following:

- Specific sign placement in Old Town (which pole, how high, etc.)
- Specific sign size within pre-set size options. (Some Old Town locations will have a range of pre-determined size options specified by the design manual and the Board can recommend the appropriate size).

National Park Service Review

The National Park Service (NPS) is represented on the SAG and the proposed program has been reviewed by additional NPS staff. City Staff will continue to work with NPS to ensure they have ample opportunity to review the program – specifically those elements of the system proposed for and visible from Washington Street. In terms of Phase 1 sign types, NPS has expressed concern regarding the overall quantity of signs and their potential to detract from historic buildings. Staff has asked NPS for a meeting to present data and analysis showing that there would not be a net increase of signs on Washington Street and that the proposed signs would replace existing signs in a more cohesive,

attractive and strategic manner. NPS has also expressed concern regarding the scale of vehicular signs on Washington Street. Although these signs are not part of the Phase 1 proposal, Staff will share with NPS the sign reduction study that Sasaki performed for King Street vehicular signs in an effort to strike the appropriate balance between effective functioning of the sign and not detracting from the scale and historic character of the corridor. Using full scale mock-ups, Sasaki has reduced the originally proposed vehicular signs by almost 40% through a more efficient layout. Sasaki will also study the proposed content of the signs to determine if any additional size efficiencies can be achieved. Once the refinements are complete, Staff will provide NPS with specific sign locations and dimensions for review. (It should be noted here that Sasaki will be performing this analysis citywide as part of its standard review).

Lastly, NPS has expressed an objection to the Gateway designs as currently proposed. The Gateway design is still very much in the development phase and Staff will provide the consultant with NPS input to take into consideration while further developing the design. NPS prefers the more traditional Park Service stone (or brick) wall with the City's name.

Parking Zones

Sasaki proposed the Old Town parking zones, shared with the Planning Commission at the work session in January, as a means for businesses to be able to assist visitors in advance (through the web, brochures, etc.) and direct them to the parking district within Old Town in which their business is located. This proposal stemmed from a recommendation in the 2005 King Street Retail study, which also stated that the districts would be an effective way of positively "branding" areas along King Street for the businesses and restaurants. This proposal has received generally negative reviews as many people believe that the zones may be confusing, especially to tourists, and may alienate business owners who don't like the nomenclature of the zones. Staff will ask the Stakeholder Advisory Group and others to weigh in with final recommendations over the course of the summer (prior to completion of the sign manual) as to whether or not to include the parking zones in the program.

Pedestrian Mini-Kiosks

As stated previously, Staff has developed three options with regards to the programming and message content of the pedestrian mini-kiosks. The programming of the kiosks has ramifications on the frequency of these signs on King Street as well as the A-frame program. Staff recommends postponing a decision on the retail component of the programming of the mini-kiosks until fall 2009. At the same time, Staff recommends that funding for the mini-kiosks be maintained in the CIP request, pending a final decision on programming.

Illumination

Staff is not asking the Planning Commission to make a determination on illumination of signs at this stage. Illumination is a detail that will be reviewed further over the course of the summer in development of the design guidelines manual. Of the Phase 1 signs, Sasaki has recommended that the Freestanding Visitor Kiosk and the Parking Lot Identity signs be illuminated. Their initial recommendation is that the parking lot ID signs be externally illuminated and that the kiosks be internally illuminated. The BAR has expressed the preference that both sign elements be illuminated externally so Sasaki will review the options and provide precedent images of both types of lighting for freestanding kiosks in order to provide some comparison. In either case, this is an issue that will be resolved after conceptual approval of Phase 1 and prior to public hearing of the design guidelines manual.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve Phase 1 (Concept) of the Wayfinding Program and postpone a decision on the retail component of the pedestrian mini-kiosk signs until fall 2009.

V. ATTACHMENTS:

1. Phase 1 sign set: images of proposed signs in Old Town context
2. Map of Phase 1 Signs in the King Street Corridor
3. March 14, 2009 City Council docket item regarding extension of the A-frame program
4. King Street sign inventory and matrix demonstrating the number of signs to be replaced/removed by the Wayfinding program
5. Stakeholder Advisory Group membership

VI. STAFF:

Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
Kathleen Beeton, Division Chief, Neighborhood Planning & Community Development,
Department of Planning & Zoning
Andrea Barlow, Principal Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning
Carrie Beach, Urban Planner, Department of Planning & Zoning

Attachment 1
April 1, 2009
Wayfinding Phase 1

ALEXANDRIA

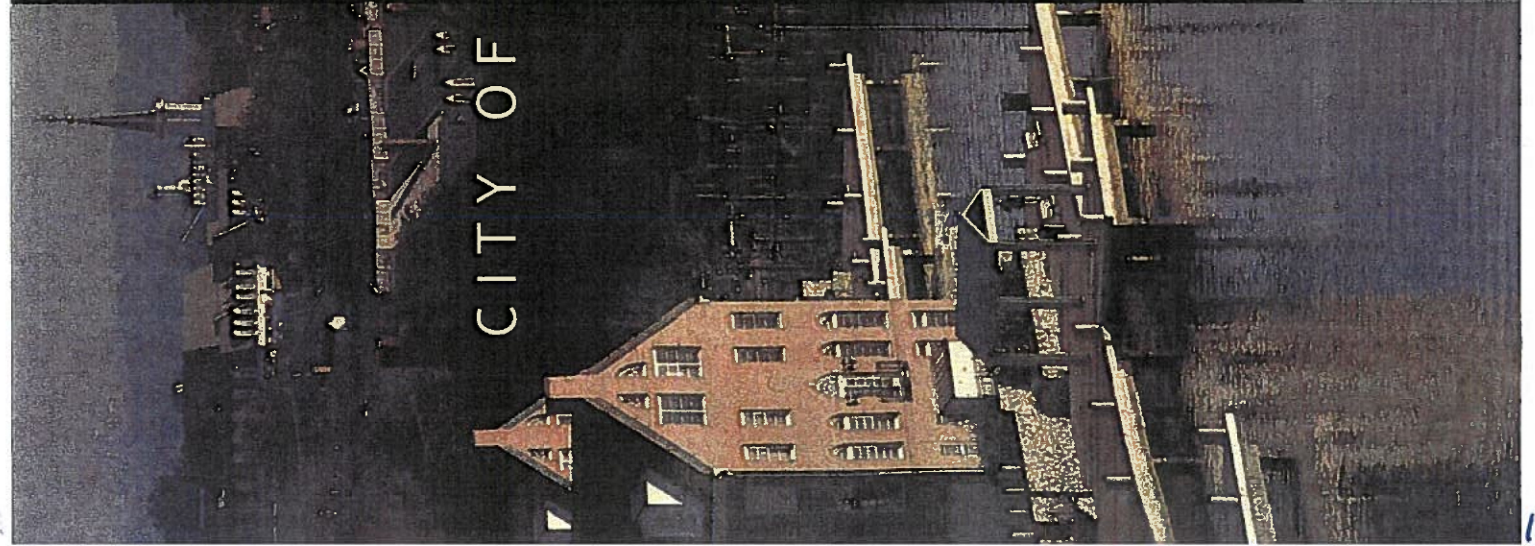
WAYFINDING PROGRAM

Phase 1 Sign Set

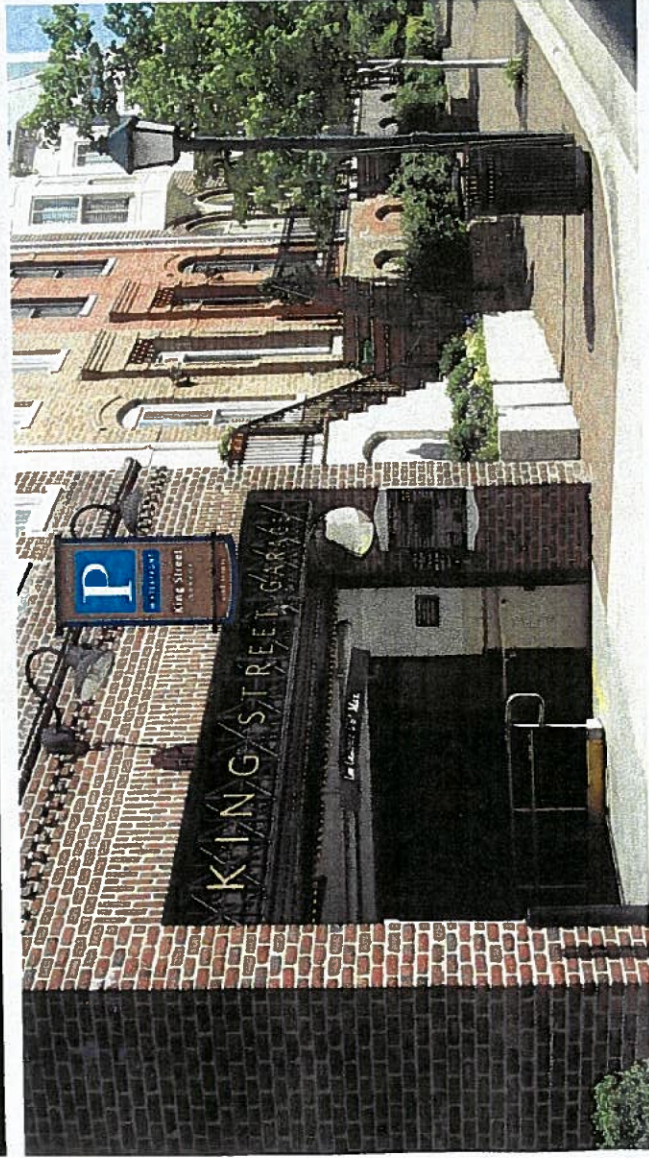
1 April 2009

S A S A K I

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Vehicular | Public Parking: Identification



Parking Lot Identity Sign for Structured Garages (Qty. 6)

Parking Lot Identity Sign for Surface Lots (Qty. 5)

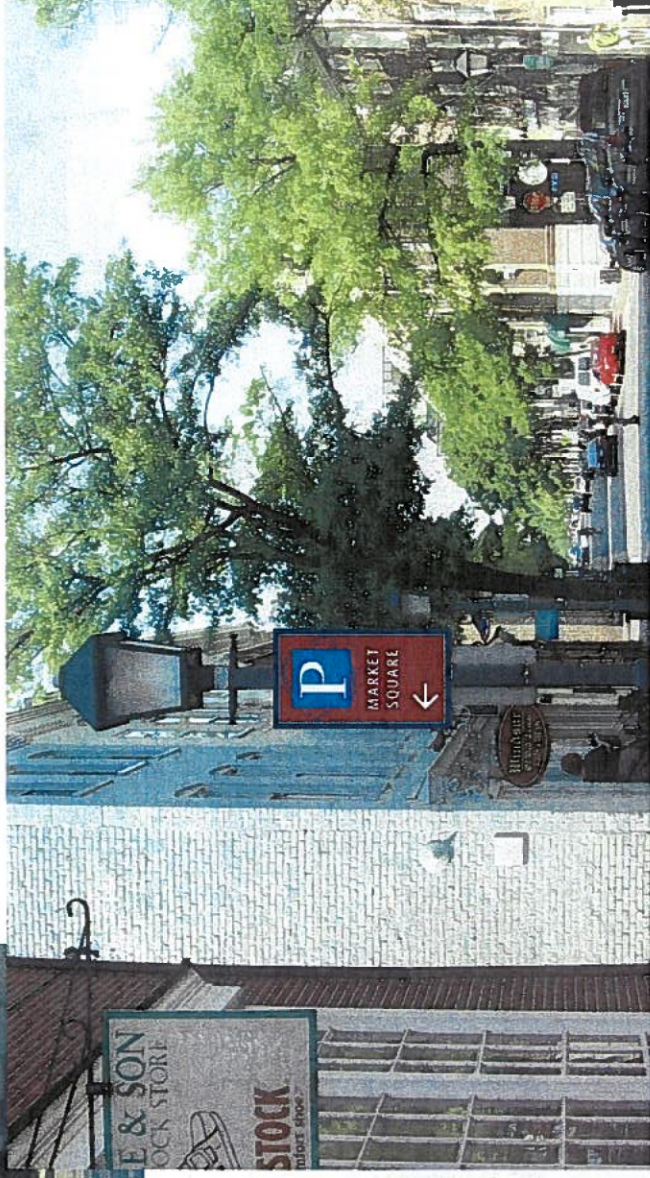


Vehicular | Public Parking: Trailblazers

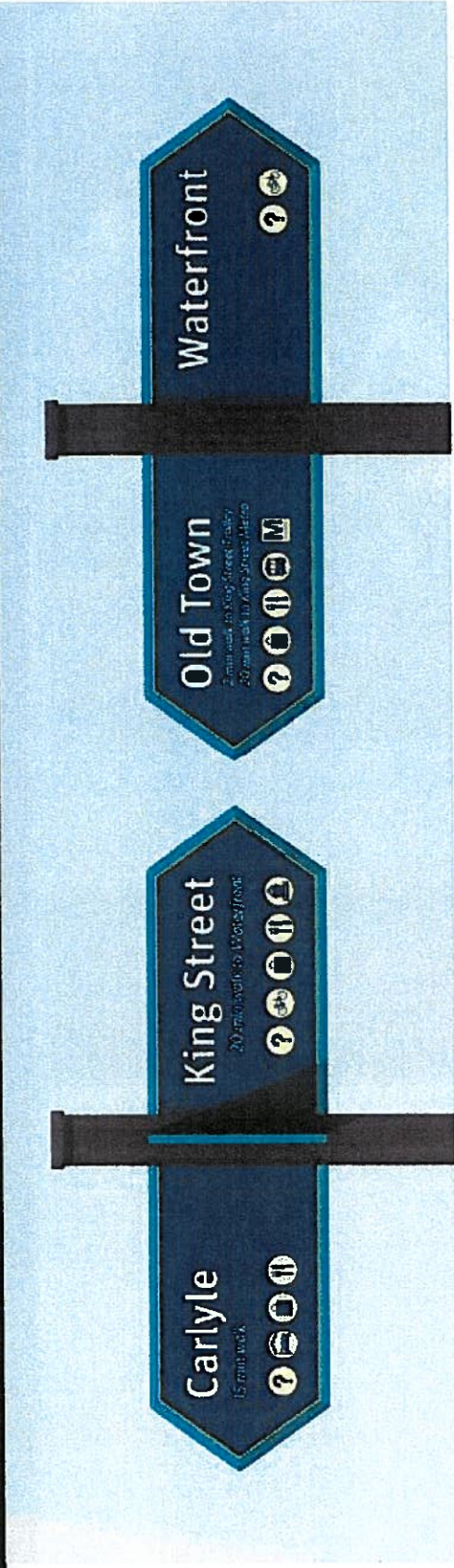


Parking Trailblazer Sign (horizontal) (Qty. 20)

Parking Trailblazer Sign (vertical) (Qty. 50)

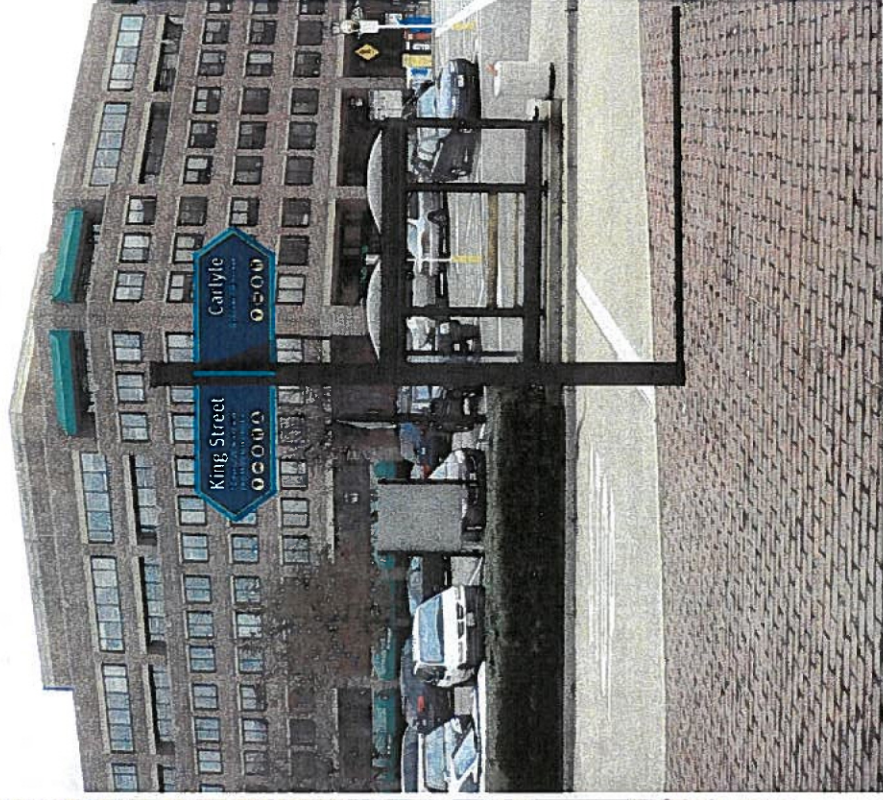


Pedestrian "Pointer" Directionals



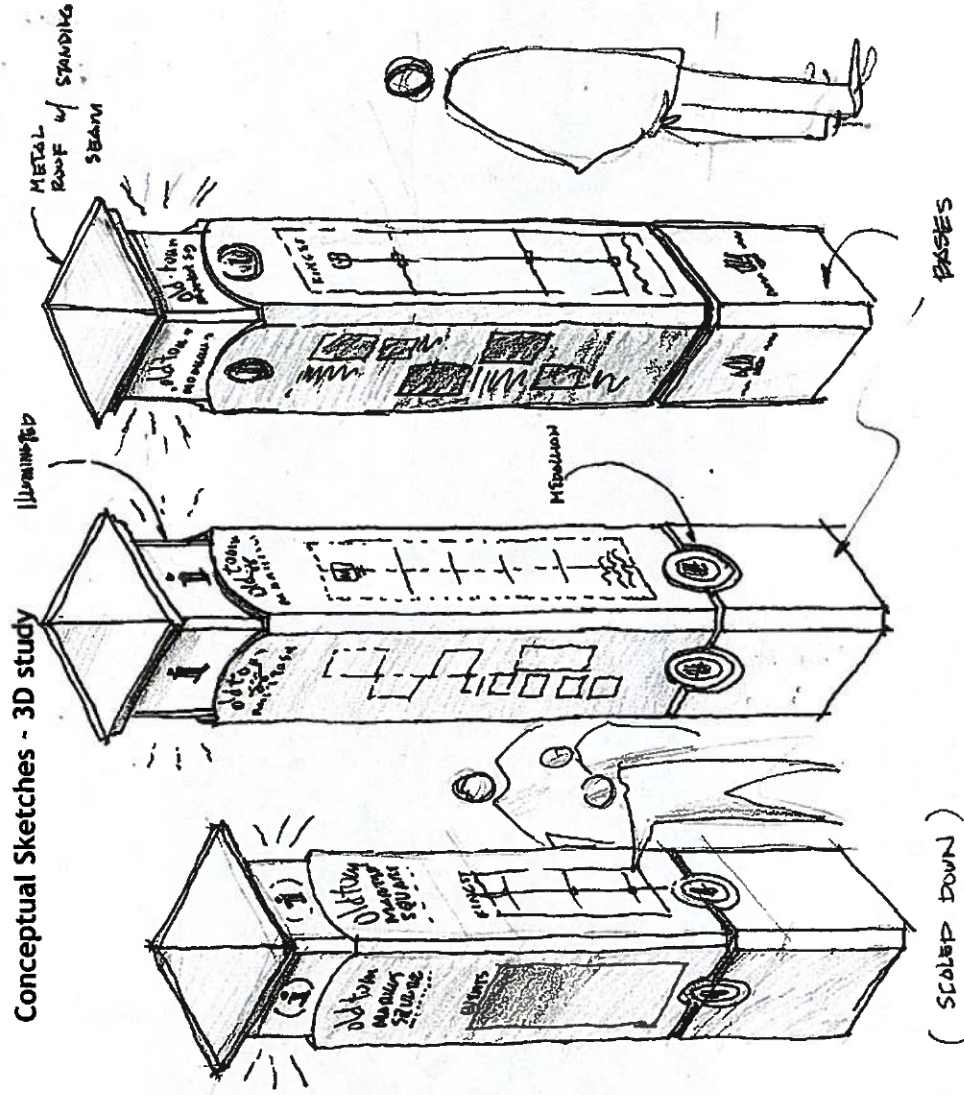
Pedestrian | Pedestrian Directional "Pointer"

Pedestrian Directional Pointer for non-street grid areas (Qty. 5)
 Located at confusing points of entry (King St. Metro, Water Taxi dock, etc)
 where it is helpful to "lead by the nose"



Pedestrian Freestanding Visitor Information Kiosk

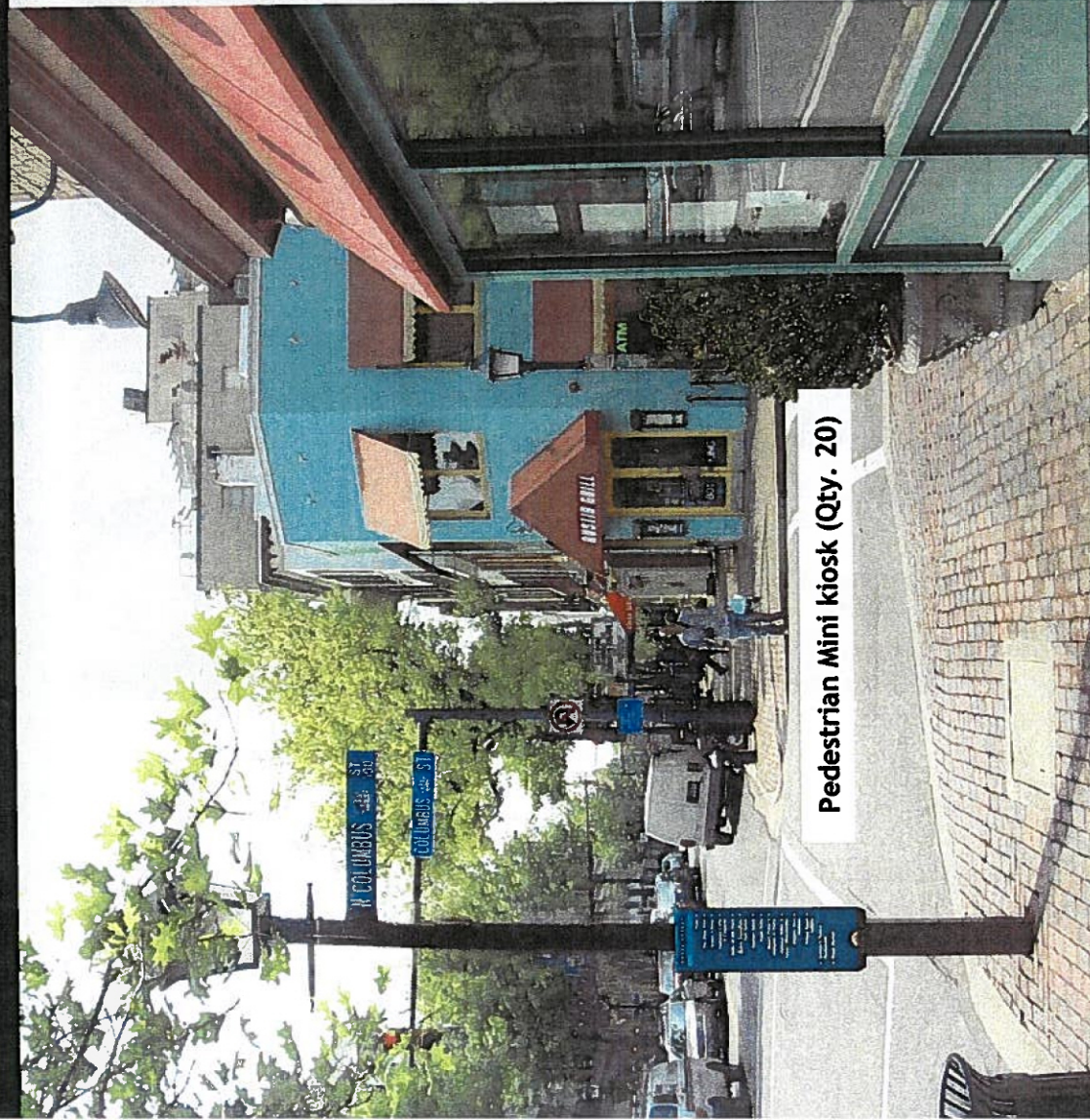
Freestanding Visitor Kiosk (Qty. 2)





Wall Mounted Visitor
Kiosk (Qty. 6)

Pedestrian "Mini Kiosk"

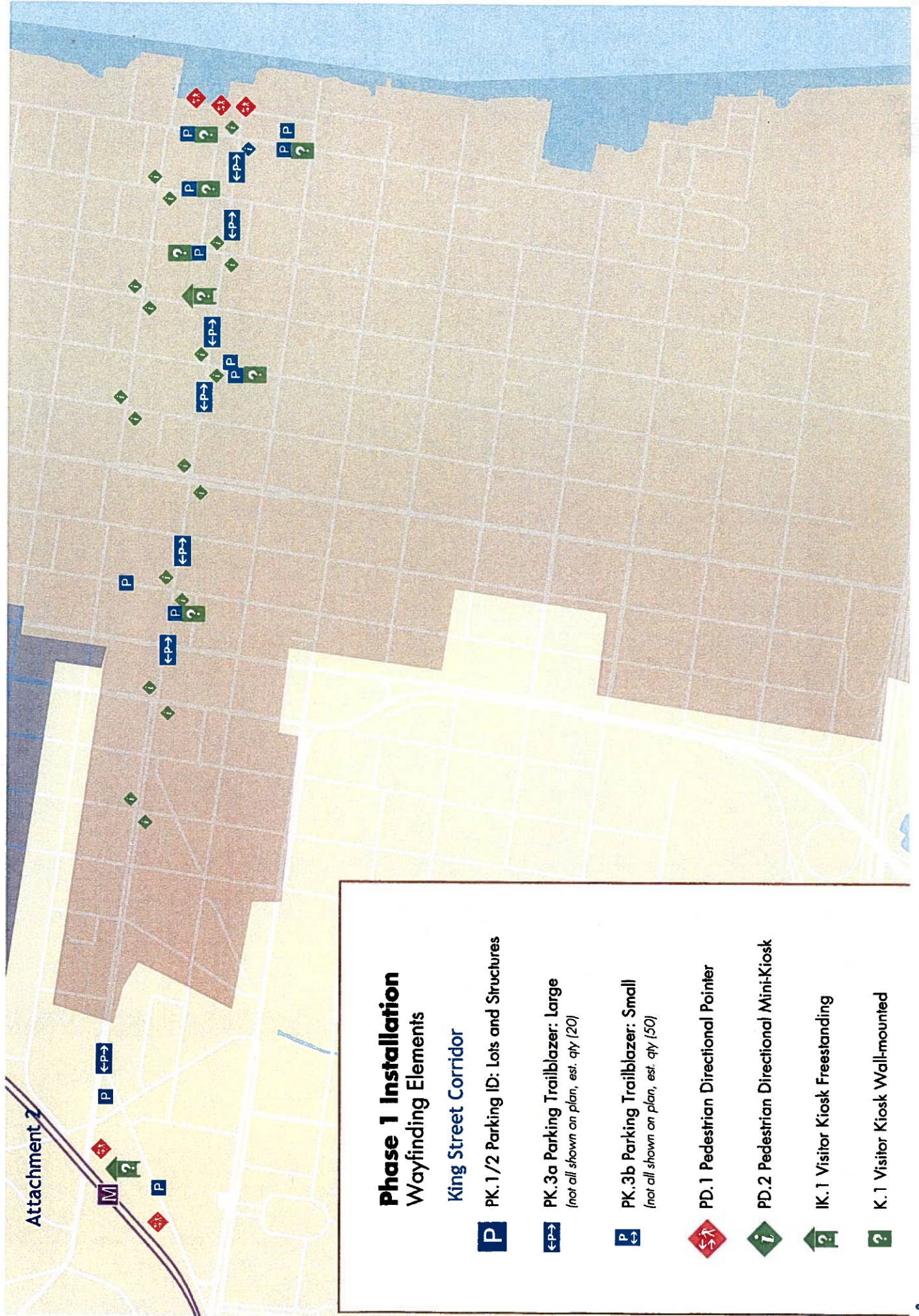


Pedestrian Mini kiosk (Qty. 20)



CITY OF **ALEXANDRIA** WAYFINDING DESIGN

SASAKI



City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 4, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING EXTENSION OF PILOT PROGRAM FOR TEMPORARY PORTABLE SIGNS FOR RETAIL BUSINESSES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (OLD TOWN)

ISSUE: Extension of the pilot program for temporary portable signs for retail businesses in the Central Business District.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council accept the proposed ordinance on first reading, which authorizes the proposed extension until November 1, 2009 and provides for earlier termination if superseded by an adopted wayfinding program, of the pilot program for temporary portable signs for retail businesses in the Central Business District (generally located between Duke and Queen Streets, east of West Street, in Old Town) and set it for second reading, public hearing and final passage on March 14.

BACKGROUND: On November 25, 2008, the Alexandria City Council voted to adopt an emergency ordinance to establish a pilot program to allow temporary portable signs alerting King Street pedestrians to restaurant and retail-oriented businesses in the Central Business District (generally located between Duke and Queen Streets, east of West Street, in Old Town) but not located on King Street. The program established parameters for acceptable "A-frame" signs. Businesses were responsible for coordinating among the other businesses on the block to create an acceptable sign, and otherwise comply with the ordinance. The initial pilot program is effective through March 15, 2009. It is proposed to extend the pilot program until November 1, 2009.

DISCUSSION: Participating businesses off King Street report that the A-frame signs have had measurable positive impacts on sales during an extremely difficult retail period. Thirteen A-frame permits have been issued to date and many retailers have expressed an interest, though are reluctant to participate until they have more certainty regarding the program's longevity. Over the duration of the program, the City has received few complaints from residents and pedestrians, although when residents are asked directly, the response is more mixed. Resident objections have focused on a lack of uniformity of design, the image that A-frame signs convey, and concerns about barriers to pedestrian movement. These objections can be addressed by the proposed, but not yet funded Wayfinding Program, either through the proposed mini-kiosks, or

through a more standardized A-frame design and program consistent with the citywide Wayfinding system.

Because the A-frame signs have been, according to affected merchants, effective, City staff recommends that a public hearing be held to review an extension of the temporary sign program until fall 2009 and how it may be improved. This would provide the opportunity to assess the impact of the signs in terms of sidewalk clutter during the spring and summer months.

See attachment for the November 20, 2008, memorandum that describes the program components and review process.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no direct fiscal impact of extending the temporary A-frame sign program, with the indirect fiscal impact of staff administration of the program absorbed by the staff of the Department of Planning and Zoning. The fiscal impact of the initial phase of the proposed Wayfinding Program would be \$250,000 plus operating support (see FY 2010 Budget Memorandum #8).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment I: Memorandum dated November 20, 2008, to Mayor and City Council on an Ordinance to Establish a Pilot Program for Temporary Portable Signs for Retail Businesses in the Central Business District

Attachment II: Ordinance Authorizing Extension of the Pilot Program for Temporary Portable Signs for Retail Businesses in the Central Business District

STAFF:

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Richard J. Baier, Director, Transportation & Environmental Services

Sandra Marks, Principal Transportation Planner, Transportation & Environmental Services

John Catlett, Director, Office of Building and Fire Code Administration

Mike Hatfield, Disabilities Resources Coordinator, Office on Human Rights

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMAN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A PILOT PROGRAM FOR TEMPORARY
PORTABLE SIGNS FOR RETAIL BUSINESSES IN THE CENTRAL
BUSINESS DISTRICT

ISSUE: Ordinance to establish a pilot program for temporary portable signs for retail businesses in the Central Business District.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council adopt the attached ordinance as emergency legislation at its November 25, 2008, meeting.

DISCUSSION: It is proposed that a pilot program of expedited administrative approvals for coordinated temporary portable signs be established to improve the visibility of restaurants and retail-oriented businesses in Old Town (Central Business District). The proposal is designed to provide one tool that small businesses can immediately use to stimulate business in the current economic downturn and during the upcoming holiday shopping season, and enhance the economic vitality of the business district as a whole. The recommendation builds on a series of other economic development efforts over the last several years, including the King Street Retail Strategy plan, the outdoor dining program, and the King Street trolley, all designed to bolster the pedestrian activity, economic stability, historic ambiance and tourist attraction of this important district. This pilot program recognizes that:

- The temporary portable signs to be allowed under the proposal would otherwise not be allowed because, as a zoning matter, they are remote from the location they advertise; in addition, an encroachment ordinance would normally be required to allow their location on the public right-of-way;
- Many vital businesses that are a part of the Old Town experience are located one or two blocks from the King Street corridor, but are not visible to pedestrians and others along King Street. Given the current economic and retail downturn, steps should be taken to assist the interesting, unique and attractive restaurants and retail businesses located in these areas and allow them to participate in the tourism and economic activity of King Street;

- Today, although not permitted by City ordinance, there are many businesses that erect signs on corners directing shoppers to their stores on side streets, but they are designed and placed on the sidewalk without coordination or oversight. The proposed program will provide expedited review of the location and design of all such signs, while maintaining a safe pedestrian thoroughfare and accessibility.
- The ongoing citywide Wayfinding planning process has recognized the dilemma posed by the recent proliferation of remote temporary portable signs, but will not have a solution for businesses not located on King Street in time to assist those enterprises for the upcoming holiday season.

The pilot program is a coordinated effort among several departments and agencies, including Planning and Zoning, Transportation and Environmental Services, Code Administration, the Disabilities Resources Coordinator and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP). The program includes the following proposed components:

Duration of the Program: The pilot program is temporary. If approved by Council, it would begin upon adoption of the ordinance and will end on March 15, 2009.

Eligibility: Restaurants and retail oriented businesses located (see map – Attachment I) within the Central Business District (CBD) not on King Street would be eligible to participate in the program. This includes businesses within the CBD on the 100 and 200 blocks of streets intersecting King Street and on streets parallel to King Street. The map attached to the proposed ordinance identifies the overall zone within which the temporary portable sign program applies. Eligible businesses include restaurants, retail uses and retail oriented businesses, which include personal services uses, as those terms are defined by the zoning ordinance. Eligible business shall not include banks, savings and loans, credit unions, real estate, contractor or other offices.

Coordination and Cooperation among Businesses: Eligible businesses would coordinate their efforts for King Street visibility by creating a single sign that refers to each of them and is placed at the corner of King Street closest to their location. If some businesses within a block face choose not to participate, then the remaining businesses may apply for a permit for a temporary portable sign. The permit application will require an affidavit attesting to the fact that all eligible businesses on the blockface were offered the opportunity to participate. A map and/or list will be made available to assist eligible businesses in determining which other eligible businesses must be contacted.

Eligible businesses within the Central Business District located on the east-west streets of Cameron, Queen, Prince and Duke will coordinate with other eligible businesses in the 100 and 200 blocks of the north-south streets in order to participate and have their business name included in a temporary portable sign located on the corner of King closest to their business. Maps showing the sign location plan will be available from P&Z.

Temporary Sign Permit: All participating businesses will submit a coordinated application for a temporary portable sign that will be reviewed and approved by the Directors of P&Z and T&ES. The application will include a photo of the proposed King Street corner, the specific location and method of sign placement, and a mock up of the proposed sign size and design. The

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application will also include an affidavit indicating that all eligible businesses were invited to participate. Temporary portable signs without a permit will not be allowed. City staff is committed to reviewing and responding to complete sign permit applications as quickly as possible in order to facilitate this process for businesses. In some cases, complete applications may take up to 2 business days to review in order to ensure safe and unobstructed pedestrian clearance.

Sign Locations: Typically, the businesses on a street intersecting or parallel to King Street will erect their coordinated sign on the corner of King Street closest to their business locations. Some situations with unique circumstances will require a separate review and determination by staff to find the most appropriate location. However, only one temporary portable sign will be permitted on any one King Street corner, and each eligible business may be featured on only one sign. In addition, acceptable sign locations will:

- Maintain at least a five foot minimum pedestrian path along the sidewalk;
- Be placed so as not to obstruct pedestrian movement and safety. People should be able to safely cross the street, and safely enter and alight from cars and buses without obstruction;
- Allow clear access to curb ramps;
- Not be within five feet of a curb or curb ramp next to an accessible-only parking space;
- Be stabilized or weighted to remain safely in place, preferably with a sandbag within the base of the frame; and
- Not damage the public right of way or any other property.

Temporary Portable Sign Design: Signs will be relatively consistent in size; they may be up to 42" tall and up to 30" wide. Sign colors and design are at the discretion of the business owners, but should look professional and be in keeping with the character of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. No illumination, neon letters or neon background are permitted. A drawing or sample of the proposed sign, including its size, text, materials, colors, and method of installation will be part of the temporary sign permit application. The cost of the signs would be borne by a business or the businesses listed on the sign.

Potential Future Sign Changes: Depending on the success of the proposed pilot program for temporary portable signage on King Street, and after discussion with businesses, the economic development community, and interagency staff, staff will consider whether a long term temporary portable sign program should be pursued and, if so, what amendments to the zoning ordinance and other city requirements should be made to accomplish that end. Any long term changes will require public hearing so that the full public may be involved in that discussion.

Public Outreach: Because of the rapid nature of the economic downturn, staff worked very quickly to have the parameters of the pilot program finalized so that businesses could take advantage of the signs in time for the post Thanksgiving holiday shopping weekend and the remaining holiday shopping season. Regrettably, this accelerated timeframe did not allow for the public outreach that staff would conduct under normal circumstances. If Council determines that the pilot program should be extended, a full public outreach process and public hearing would be conducted. Outreach to businesses was conducted by AEDP after Council's

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November 19 legislative meeting. Information about the proposed pilot program was posted on the P&Z website on Monday, November 24.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment I: CBD Map

Attachment II: Proposed Ordinance.

STAFF:

Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning

Richard Josephson, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

Peter Leiberg, Principal Planner, Zoning Compliance, Planning and Zoning

Carrie Beach, Urban Planner, Planning and Zoning

Richard Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services

Sandra Marks, Principal Transportation Planner, Transportation and Environmental Services

John Catlett, Director, Office of Building and Fire Code Administration

Michael Hatfield, Disabilities Resources Coordinator, Office on Human Rights

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Attachment 3 (Page 1)

Sign Inventory

Signs on King Street to be replaced/removed by Wayfinding program

KING STREET	Pedestrian Orientation (blue/white)	"Shops/More Shops" (brown/white)	Parking Directional (white/green)	Visitor Information (Thistle Signs)	Trolley Stop	Dash Stop	Regulatory parking	Regulatory traffic	A Frame	Misc.	Total	Benches
Unit block	1	1	1	1	1	0	15	0	2	3	25	5
100 block	2	2	1	1	1	0	19	0	2	1	29	8
200 block	2	2	2	2	1	0	20	0	1	0	30	8
300 block	1	1	2	1	1	1	19	0	2	1	29	4
400 block	1	0	1	0	1	1	10	0	2	1	17	8
500 block	1	1	2	0	1	2	19	0	0	0	26	8
600 block	1	0	1	1	1	2	9	3	3	1	22	4
700 block	1	0	1	1	1	2	13	2	0	1	22	6
800 block	1	0	1	1	1	1	11	1	1	3	21	4
900 block	1	0	2	1	1	2	12	4	3	0	26	8
1000 block	1	0	2	0	1	1	4	7	1	1	18	8
1100 block	1	0	0	1	1	1	5	6	0	0	15	6
1200 block	1	0	0	0	1	1	7	1	1	0	12	8
1300 block	1	0	0	0	0	2	9	1	0	0	13	8
1400 block	1	0	0	0	1	1	8	1	0	0	12	8
1500 block	1	0	0	0	1	2	12	0	0	0	16	8
1700 block	1	0	0	0	1	1	13	1	0	0	17	6
1800 block	1	0	0	0	1	1	4	1	0	1	9	6
metro												
TOTAL	20	7	16	10	11	21	208	28	16	13	359	121
Double-sided; one per block on alternating sides of street	None west of St Asaphs	9 on traffic signal mast-arms; 7 on upright poles.	None west of Henry	Double- sided	Double- sided				e.g. Adopt-a- block, other directionals			Some damaged

Attachment 3 (page 2)

Signs on King Street to be Replaced/Removed by Phase 1 of Wayfinding program

KING STREET	EXISTING			Total	PROPOSED		
	(A) Pedestrian Orientation (blue/white)	(B) "Shops/More Shops" (brown/white)	(C) Parking Directional (white/green)		(A) and (B) replaced by Mini Kiosks	(C) replaced by new parking directionals	Total
Unit block	1	1	1	3	1	1	2
100 block	2	2	1	5	2	1	3
200 block	2	2	2	6	2	2	4
300 block	1	1	2	4	2	2	4
400 block	1	0	1	2	1	1	2
500 block	1	1	2	4	0	2	2
600 block	1	0	1	2	1	1	2
700 block	1	0	1	2	1	1	2
800 block	1	0	1	2	1	1	2
900 block	1	0	2	3	1	2	3
1000 block	1	0	2	3	0	2	2
1100 block	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
1200 block	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
1300 block	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
1400 block	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
1500 block	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
1700 block	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
1800 block	1	0	0	1	2	0	2
metro							
TOTAL	20	7	16	43	16	16	34

Double-sided; one per block on alternating sides of street
None west of St Asaphs
9 on traffic signal mast-arms; 7 on upright poles.

**City of Alexandria
Wayfinding Program**

Stakeholder Advisory Group Membership

Wendy Albert, West End Business Association
Chuck Benagh, Commission on Persons with Disabilities
Kate Barrett, National Park Service
Christy Blake, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Stephanie Brown, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association
James Buck, Ebenezer Baptist Church
Felix Oliver, Eisenhower Partnership
Joe Egerton, Arts Afire
Bill Harris, Commission on Aging
Mark Benedict, Federation of Civic Associations
Stacy Langsdale, Alexandria Ped/Bike Association
Cindy McCartney, Alexandria Retailers Off King Street
Pat Miller, Commission for the Arts
David Martin, Chamber of Commerce
Michael McBride, WMATA
Sandy Modell, DASH
Amy Slack, Federation of Civic Associations
Ellen Stanton, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
Wilson Thompson, Queen Street Area Business Association
Jennifer Walker, Del Ray Business Association
Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet, Federation of Civic Associations
John Varghese, Westin Hotel
Tara Zimmnick-Calico, Torpedo Factory Art Center

Staff:

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